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CHAP-BOOKS AND FOLK-LORE TRACTS
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Chap-Books
and
Folk-Lore Tracts.

Edited by

G. L. Gomme, F.S.A.

and

H. B. Wheatley, F.S.A.

First Series.

III.

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MOTHER BUNCH'S CLOSET

NEWLY BROKE OPEN,

AND THE

HISTORY OF MOTHER BUNCH OF THE WEST.

PRINTED FROM
THE EARLIEST EXTANT COPIES,
AND EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY

GEORGE LAURENCE GOMME, F.S.A.

LONDON:
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1885.

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Introduction.

This chap-book is not a story. It is a collection of charms and dreams supposed to have been communicated by a personage bearing the name of Mother Bunch, a name unhistorical and, so far as I have been able to ascertain, unknown to any other department of literature.

The edition here printed is made up of two distinct parts. The first part is the oldest, and at one time the only portion extant. This is reprinted from the copy in the Pepsyian Library at Cambridge, dated 1685. The second part is printed from the copy in the British Museum library, and dated by the authorities there 1780, this being the earliest version I have been able to find.

From the wording of its title, "Mother Bunch's Closet *Newly* Broke Open," there is evidence of the first part being a continuation of a chap-book already issued upon the same subject. For this we must refer to a jest-book first published in 1604, the title of which runs as follows: *Pasquil's Jests, mixed with Mother Bunche's Merriments.* . . . . . This book is a well-known collection of jests of a rather broad nature, and

its style of composition lent itself to a continuation such as we have in the chap-book now under consideration. There is no other connection between the two publications than the title.*

The later editions of this chap-book differ considerably from that of 1685 in the Pepsyian Collection. Almost every page varies, and that too in no inconsiderable manner. It is not perhaps necessary to point out all the variations because they are not of great literary or historical interest, but it may be well to indicate the chief differences. The 1685 edition, as here printed, contains two parts. These in later editions are amalgamated, and the title on page 10, "The second part of Mother Bunch, who lived at Bonny Ventor in the West," does not therefore appear. As a specimen of the later editions, the following is the opening passages of the 1780 edition, and other pages are similarly altered :

"Mother Bunch's Cabinet Broke Open.

"Reading over many ancient histories, it was my chance to meet with a story of an old woman who lived in the west country, who took delight in studying her fortune; when she found herself full twenty years old, she thought her luck worse than some who were married at fifteen or sixteen, which

* *Pasquil's Jests* will be reprinted in one of the series of the present collection. Hazlitt's *Handbook to Popular Literature* says there are editions in 1604, 1609, 1629, 1635, 1650 and 1669. Mr. Hazlitt has reprinted it in the third series of his *Old English Jest Books*, 1864

much troubled her mind; but to prevent all doubts she resolved to try a story she had often heard her mother talk of, and, finding it true, she resolved to teach other wonders.

"On a time this old woman, having newly buried her husband, was taking a walk in the fields for the benefit of the air, sometimes thinking of the loss of her husbands, for she had had three, yet had a great desire for the fourth. So it happened as she was walking alone she espied a young maid by a meadow side. Good morrow, maid, said the old woman; how do you do? are not you well? Yes, mother, I am very well, but somewhat troubled in mind."

The paragraph on page 20 is entirely left out in the later editions, and the following addition is made:

Now Mother Bunch's store exhaust,
She sits her down to spin;
Then studies how she soon may make
Her Second Part begin.

Which now is finished and sold
Where you have had the First,
'Twill make you wise, also to laugh,
Untill your sides do burst.

These are all the points of difference which it will be necessary to note between the 1685 edition, now reprinted, and those that appeared later in conjunction with the new second part.

The woodcuts in these chap-books are of the rudest description, and they did not appear worth reproducing. Mr. Ashton, in his *Chap-books of the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 84-87, has given three woodcuts from the second part of the 1780 edition, and the following lines, which, together with the funeral picture, make the finish of the book. These lines are not printed on our last page:

> Thus all her Art at length could not her save,
> From death's dire stroke, and mould'ring in the grave.

We will now discuss the special importance of Mother Bunch's collection of dreams and prognostications. It is well known that these subjects form a not unimportant branch of folk-lore, and it is therefore interesting to find that through the medium of this seventeenth-century chap-book we have preserved to us some scraps of folk-lore which are of value. They for the most part group themselves round certain days in the calendar, and it will therefore perhaps be best to adopt this arrangement for our consideration of them. Thus we have St. Agnes' Day (21 Jan.), Valentine's Day (14 Feb.), 20th April, Midsummer Eve (24 June), St. Luke's Day (Oct. 18), St. Thomas's Day (Dec. 21). Almost all the customs recorded by Mother Bunch on these days are incorporated by Sir Henry Ellis in his edition of Brand's *Popular Antiquities*; but their original value is ascertained by the independent practice of the self-same customs in many parts of England, as noted by authorities who did not know Mother

Bunch. Take, for instance, St. Agnes' Day. Ben Jonson, Aubrey in his *Miscellanies*, Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Barnaby Googe, all refer to the self-same customs recorded in this chap-book. Of course if this rule held good throughout, and in matters of detail, it might be said that the chap-book was copied from these earlier authorities. But this can be shown not to be so by one curious piece of evidence. The Scottish St. Agnes rhyme differs from that of Mother Bunch. It is as follows :

Agnes sweet, and Agnes fair,
Hither, hither, now repair,
Bonny Agnes let me see
The lad who is to marry me.

(See *Times Telescope*, 1823, p. 15.) Again, the 20th April is not a festival day, but in Worcestershire there is a belief in the county that the cuckoo is never heard till Tenbury Fair day, which is the 20th April (Dyer's *Popular Customs*, p. 192) ; a fact which, when compared to the narrative on page 6, goes far to prove that this Worcestershire belief was known to the author of Mother Bunch. The unlucky days mentioned on pages 11 and 32 are curious, and should be compared with the calendar customs collected in Hampson's *Medii Ævi Kalendarium*. Of the nature of the customs performed on the various days it will not be necessary to say much. They are all connected with divination for a wife or a husband. But they are curious in preserving the rhyming words of an incantation

which may be of considerable archaic importance if we could arrive, by a comparison of all the extant rhymes on this subject, at something like the original form. Coupled with this are two significant customs, namely, the journey to the church-door on St. Agnes Eve (p. 30), which may be considered with the perambulation of the church recorded on page 18. These may be compared with the Derbyshire custom recorded in the *Jour. Arch. Assoc.* vol. vii. p. 209. And the gathering of flowers in a silent grove on Midsummer Eve (p. 31) should also be noted.

Of customs incidentally mentioned there are divinations connected with apple (p. 8), cakes (18), cuckoo (20), flowers (19), hemp-seed (18), lemon (30), new moon (19), nuts (30), peas-cod (29). Horn Fair day is mentioned on p. 24. On page 16 in the rhymes there given the game of tick-tack is mentioned. This is a game at tables similar to backgammon, and is sometimes called trick-track. Mr. Wheatley, in his *Dictionary of Reduplicated Words*, has collected the instances of its mention in the early writers.

The following are the proverbs :—

(1) An ill bird befoules it own nest (6).

(2) Kiss and tell is base play (6).

(3) If you will not when you may, when you will you shall have nay (13).

(4) Look before you leap (13) (see *Paradise of Daynty Deuyses*, 1578 ; Tottel's *Miscellany*, 1557).

(5) A slut will poison thy gut (14).

(6) Riches has wings and flyeth away (14).

(7) Ill words corrupt good manners (15).

(8) [Old maids] lead apes in hell (18) (see *Much Ado about Nothing*, act ii. sc. 1).

(9) She that's afraid of the grass must never —— in the meadow (26).

(10) One swallow never makes a summer, nor one woodcock a winter (26) (see Polyd. Virg. *Prov. Libellus*, 1498; Northbrook's *Treatise against Dauncing* (1577), Swallow's *Cinthia's Revenge*, 1613; Arist. Ethic. Nicom. lib. i.)

(11) Set thy stool in the sun, if a knave goes, an honest man may come (27).

(12) He would have played a lesson on my lute (27).

Only four of these are recorded in Hazlitt, namely, numbers 4, 6, 8, and 10.

MOTHER BUNCH'S CLOSET NEWLY BROKE OPEN.

Wherein is discovered many rare Secrets of Art & Nature; tryed and experienced by learned Phylosophers, and recommended to all ingenious young men and maids, Teaching young men (in a natural way) how to get good wifes & maids good husbands, Experimented by ancient authors as, viz. The manner of St. Agnes Fast, the 21st of January The washing the Smock on Midsummer eve The sowing of Hempseed. The Dutch Cake. Teaching them how in sleep and dreams to see and know them perfectly.

No Harm at all is in this set,
But teaching Maids Husbands to get;
And also young Men of each Degree
Turn o're the Leaf, and you may see,
What there is, writ in Merriment
Hoping to give you all content.

By your Loving Friend poor Tom for the King a Lover of Mirth; but a Hater of Traytors and Treason. T.R.

Printed by A. M. for P. Brooksby in Py Corner 1685.

MOTHER BUNCH

OF THE

WEST, ETC.

Reading over many ancient histories, it was my chance to meet with a story of an old woman who lived in the west county, who took delight in studying how she might know what a sweetheart she might have, for at that time she thought she had tarried very long; she being full twenty years of age, thought (in her mind) that her fortune was not so good as other maidens, which she knew was married some at fifteen, and some at sixteen, which troubled her very sore; but to prevent all other doubts, she was fully resolved to try an old story which she had heard her Grandmother talk of many a time and did, and finding some of them to be true she took upon her to teach other maidens, as you may hear in this following discourse.

Upon a time this old woman (having newly buried her hus-

band and was a widow) oftentimes delighted to walk abroad in the fields, to take the ayr, sometimes thinking of the loss of her husbands, for she had had three, yet she had a great desire to have another, intending to try her former rules. So it happened as she was walking alone, she espied a proper young maid in the side of a meadow near a hedge side. Good morrow, maid, said the old woman, how do you do? Are you not well you look so civily? Yes, said the maid, I am not sick neither am I very well, for I am a little troubled in my mind. What is it, said the old woman, tell me, and if I can do thee any good I shall be very willing, for I have some little judgment in many things, therefore be not ashamed to tell me the truth what it is that thou art so much troubled withall. Indeed, old mother, seeing you urge me so much I shall let you understand the truth, and thus it is: We be three sisters, and the youngest was married about a year ago, and the middlemost last week, and I am the eldest, and no man heeds me. Well, daughter, if this be all that thou tellest me I do believe I can teach thee how to ease thyself in this condition, for when I was young I myself was in the very same condition, and with reading over some histories I found out the art to know him that should be my husband, and what colour of hair he should be, which, if thou will promise me to keep my counsel, I shall be willing to teach thee. I will truly, and if you will do so much for me I shall think myself very much beholding unto you, and if my fortune prove right I will make you amends.

Why then I will tell you, in the first place thou must observe St. Agnes's day, which is upon the 21st day of January, and on that day thou must be sure to keep a true fast, for thou must not eat anything all that day nor at night, and be sure that no man salute thee (not kiss thee I mean), no neither man woman nor child must kiss thy lips on that day, and then at night before thou go into thy bed, thou must be sure to put on a clean shift thou hast, and the best thou hast then the better thou may speed, and when thou lyest down lay thy right hand under thy head saying these words, *Now the god of love send me my desires;* and make sure thou as soon as thou can and thou shalt be sure to dream of him which must be thy husband and see him stand before thee and thou wilt take great notice of him and his complexion; and if he offer to salute thee do not deny him but show as much favour unto him as thou can; but if he offer to be uncivil unto thee make sure to hold thy legs together. And now, daughter, this counsel which I have given thee be sure to tell nobody, and so fare you well till I see you again.

I give you many thanks for your good advice, but one thing more I have to say unto you, What is your name? and where do you live? that I may come to see you again for I shall think the time long. Why I tell thee, daughter, my name is Mother Bunch and I live at a place called Bonny Venter, and if thou wilt but take the pains to come thither thou shalt be welcome, and so farewell.

Now Mother Bunch being departed from the maid, and going homeward she meets with another pretty young girl. Good morrow, Mother Bunch. Good morrow, pretty maid, whither are you going this morning? methinks you are very fine to-day. Fine, Mother Bunch, you do but think so. Nay I cannot discommend you; for such young maids as you must go handsome, or you will have much ado to get good husbands; for I know you think the time long. No, no, Mother, I am too young yet. Why daughter how old are you? Why I am but eighteen. But eighteen, never but it for I know thou think'st thou hast stayed long enough, and would as fain have a good husband as another. Aye, but Mother Bunch, good husbands are ill to find out, and especially with such as I am which has no skill in chusing, or else it may be I would fain have a husband as another. Why then daughter take my advice: if thou would have a good husband thou must be sure to be wise in chusing, that is to say take not one that hath a red head; for to be sure he will be one to love the smock so well, that he will be loth to let his wife have a good one to her back; neither take one that has yellow hair, for he will be apt to be jealous; no nor a black man, for they oft prove dogged. Ay, but hark you Mother Bunch if I must have neither red nor yellow nor black, what colour must I have then? It may be I have set my love on a yellow haird man already—Why, daughter, if it be so I can [tell] thee what will follow: if he prove jealous of thee thou wilt be driven into such a condition with his speeches that

thou may very well make his words good, for how should a woman forbear that which she is always told of? for to be sure if he be jealous of thee, thou hast cause to be jealous of him, for there is no man or woman that is jealous the one of the other but they are false themselves, for whores and thieves think all is alike. But hold a little, daughter, one thing more I have to say unto thee, and that is this. Take notice of thy sweethearts, when they come a wooing unto thee (I mean of their civil behaviour), for if they swear, and bow, and make great protestations, then have a care of thyself, for many words breed dissimulation; therefore have a care of such. But if a man come unto thee that is sparing of his words and very civil in his carriage, there is hopes he will prove a loving man and love passeth above all the meanes in the world. Well now Mother Bunch I must take my leave of you, giving you many thanks for your good advice; and so farewel, until I see you again, and I do intend to take your counsel.

Another time Mother Bunch was in a little meadow, not far from her own house, and it was on the 20th day of April very early in the morning before sunrising. A handsome young maid seeing her all alone, came unto her, and said, Mother Bunch, good morrow, how do you do? pray what makes you abroad so early this morning? I am persuaded you are in a study. Daughter you say very true; I am studying who must be my next husband; and if thou but please to stay a little while, thou shalt see a pretty art, which thou never saw before,

for to teach thee to know thy sweetheart. That is a pretty art indeed, and I should be very glad to learn that art.

Hark! Hark! daughter, is not yonder the cuckoo singing? Yes, yes, and I have not heard her sing this year before now. Then, daughter, sit thee down by me, but hark you daughter, are you fasting? Yes, I have neither eat nor drank yet. Ay, but hath no young man kist thee to day? No I did see no man to day. Then sit thee down by me. I think the cuckoo is mad; what a life she leads; I think she is a witch and knows what we're doing, but no matter; put off thy right foot shoe and stocking, and let me look between thy great toes. Now, daughter, see, this hair (which is a good long one); look well at it, and what colour it is (I think it is partly yellow). The very same colour will thy husband's hair be. But, Mother Bunch I do not matter the colour so much as I do his condition. I will tell thee his condition; he may prove surly enough, but thou must strive to please him as much as you can both night and day for he will be very apt to go astray, and if he do thou must not much heed him but give him good words for thou hast very bad luck if thou cannot do him one good turn for another; but as for that thou must keep that to thyself; an ill bird befoules its own nest; kiss and tell is base play. Mother Bunch you make me smile, you talk so merrily. Come, daughter, 'tis no great matter; merry talk does do no harm, but drives the time away; but as for the deed doing, I leave that to your own discretion. But hark you! daughter, I have had

three husbands myself, and I think to have another yet, and do you think I am so mad to tell him all that I do? no I am not so mad and I think thou wilt be a little wiser and yet daughter, I have another way for to teach thee how thou shalt come to know who must be thy husband, and I have approved it true; for I tryed it myself, and now is the best time of the year to try it, therefore take notice of what I say: Take a St. Thomas onion, and peel it, and lay it in a clean handkerchief and lay it under your head; and put on a clean smock, and be sure the room be clean swept where you lye, and as soon as you be laid down, be sure lay thy arms abroad, and say these words:

Good St. Thomas do me right,
And bring my love to me this night,
That I may look him in the face,
And in my arms may him embrace.

Then lying on thy back, with thy arms abroad, fall asleep as soon as thou can, and in thy first sleep thou shalt dream of him which shall be thy husband, and he will come and offer to kiss thee, but do not hinder him, but strive to catch him in thy arms, and if thou do get hold of him that is he which must be thy husband but if thou get not hold of him thou must try another night, and if thou do get hold of him hold him fast, for that is he. This I have try'd, and it has prov'd true. Yet I have another pretty way for a maid to know her sweetheart, which is as followeth: Take a summer apple, of the best fruit you can get, and take three of the best pins you can get, and stick them

into the apple close to the head, and as you stick them in take notice which of them is in the middle, and what name thou fancies best give that middle pin and put it into thy left handed glove, and lay it under thy pillow on a Saturday at night, but thou must be in bed before thou lays it under thy head, and when thou hast done, clasp thy hands together, speaking these words :—

If thou be he that must have me
To be thy wedded bride,
Make no delay, but come away,
This night to my bedside.

And in thy first sleep thou shalt see him come in his shirt and lie down by thee, and if he offer thee any abuse it will be a great sign he will prove one that will love other women as well as thee; but if he do put his hand over thee to imbrace thee be not afraid of him, for it is a great sign he will prove a good husband; and this is a good way for a young man to know his sweetheart, giving the middlemost pin the name he fancies best, putting an apple in his right handed glove, and lay it under his pillow, when he is in bed, saying,

If thou be she that must have me
In wedlock for to join,
Make no delay but come away
Unto this bed of mine.

And that night he shall see her come, and if she come in her smock and petticoat, which is a great sign she will prove a very civil woman; but if she come without her petticoat there is

danger she will prove a ranter, and therefore better lost than won. And now, daughter, the time passeth away and I must be gone, and so I bid you farewel. Mother Bunch, I give you many thanks for your good counsel, and intend to take your advice, and so fare you well.

The Second Part of Mother Bunch who lived at Bonny Venter in the West.

Upon a time Mother Bunch, being bidden to a wedding, where a great many young men and maids were met together, they knowing she was a very old woman had a great desire to drink with her and to have some civil discourse, she coming to them said one young man unto her, Mother Bunch, we know that you are a woman that hath judgment in many things; pray will you tell me my fortune? Why dost thou think that I can tell fortunes, no I can tell no fortunes, but I can tell thee that thou wilt never be true to one woman thou blinks so much on one eye, therefore hold down thy tongue. Ay, but Mother Bunch, saith another, what think you of me. Of thee, why I tell thee thou may come to marry a lady, if thou can but lay a great wager with her, three to one; and if she do but lay with thee, thou wilt be very likely to win, for thou hast mettle in thee; but have a care she win not the odds of thee, for if she do then thou art clean gone; so farewel.

Now old Mother Bunch takes her leave; and going homeward she meets with a young maid which was going to the wedding. How do you do, mother? Thank you, daughter. Whither art a going? To the wedding I believe; ay, Mother Bunch, so I am; but hark you, mother, will you sit down a little, I have something to say to you. What is it daughter? Why mother you can tell many things if you please, and I would have you when you think I shall be married, ay but daughter would you fain be married? Yes, mother, if I could but get a good husband. Then, daughter, I will tell thee the best I can, if thou will take my advice. In the month of January there are many very dangerous days for thee to take notice of in many kind of waies, and I will give thee notice of them, that is the first, the second, the fourth and fifth; there is a great many more, but in these there is great danger, for if thou think to be married on any of these daies I say there will be great danger that thy husband will make thee a cuckold, or thou wilt make him one, or else you will be soon parted by one means or other; but for all that there be so many bad daies in this month, yet I can tell of one day in this month which is lucky, and many young men and maids have a deal of hearts ease on that day, or the day after, as I shall let thee understand if thou wilt but take my advice I shall tell thee there is in January a day called St. Agnes day, it is alwaies the one and twentieth day of the month. This St. Agnes has a great favour to young men and maids, and will bring to their bedsides (as that night)

their sweethearts, if they will follow this rule as I shall declare unto thee; therefore take good notice of what I shall tell thee: Upon this St. Agnes day you must be sure to keep a true fast, for thou must neither eat nor drink all that day, nor at night, neither let any man, woman or child kiss thee that day; and thou must be sure at night when thou goest to bed, to put on a clean shift, and the best thou hast the better thou maist speed, and thou must have clean cloaths on thy head, for St. Agnes does love to see clean clothes when she comes; and when thou liest down on thy bed, lie thee down on thy back as straight as thou canst, and lay both thy hands under thy head behind and say these words:—

Now good St. Agnes play thy part,
And send to me my own sweetheart;
And shew me such an happy bliss,
This night of him to have a kiss.

And then be sure to fall asleep as soon as thou canst and before thou awake out of thy first sleep, thou shalt see him come and stand before thee, and thou shalt perceive by his habit what tradesman he is; but be sure thou declare not thy dream unto any body in ten daies and by that time thou may come to see thy dream come to pass. All this I have approved three times; for I have had three husbands, and they proved all three tradesmen; the first was a straw joiner, the second was a louse trap maker, and the third was of the gentle craft; and he come to me with his awl in his hand, and would needs prick me, ay and

did prick me, but it did not hurt me; for when I awaked out of my dream I was never the worse; but I thought the time very long till he came again, and so will all maidens do that have a desire to be married, but as for all those maids which is not minded to try St. Agnes I will tell thee the best way I can to choose them husbands by phansie, for I know some maids would have husbands some of one condition and some of another, for some will say that they will have a handsome man and a neat man, a witty man and a pretty man, nay there is no good conditions that belong to a man but they would have him to have them all, which is a thing impossible, but I must needs tell such as be so covetous that may come to be beholden to the old proverb which says:—

If you will not when you may,
When you will you shall have nay.

Therefore take my advice, and that is, if a young man comes unto you which is of a civil carriage, and of a good honest parentage, and thou think that thou canst love him, then thou must not be scornful with him, but give him civil entertainment, according to his behaviour; but of all conditions be sure to hold thy legs together, till thou have authority to lay them wide open.

And as for young men, my advice is to them to be wary in their choice, for there is as much danger in chusing a wife as can be in young women chusing husbands, for there is deceit in both; therefore, I advise all young men to *look before they*

leap, and in so doing they may prevent danger in time, therefore young men take a little of my advice in your choice; if thou can chuse take not one that hath a long nose with a scowling brow, and thin lips, for in such is great danger, for such commodity proves to have a long tongue, and that often proves the worst weapon a woman has, for I am sure he that is ty'd to a scold, is ty'd to a world of sorrow; also chuse not one that is counted a slut, for if she be a slut to be sure she is idle withall, and those two conditions will bring thee to poverty; nay besides, the old saying is, *A slut will poison thy gut*, and if thou disdain to eat with her, thou wilt think much to lie with her, if thou forsake her bed thou must have one somewhere, but where judge thou thyself. Yet now I will let you understand my best advice for young men to chuse them wives: in the first place be sure thou take one for love, not altogether for riches, for riches has wings and flyeth away; but true love will never decay; for where love is there is the blessing of God, and where the blessing of God is there can be no want, but if thy desire be to have a wife to live a loving contented life withall, then thou must not set thy mind too much on riches, but chuse a good handsome civil maid, which is not given to pride, nor scornfull in carriage and of uncivil parentage; such a maid may make a good wife; but one that has a great portion will look to be maintained proudly, nay besides she instead of rubbing thy shins in bed will be sure to rub thy nose oft with her great portion, which will breed a great deal of dissension,

for ill words corrupt good manners, and one evil word brings in another, so let this suffice you have a desire to have good wives: and take notice of what I have already said, and you may come to speed the better.

And as for young maids, this is my advice, if they will not try St. Agnes fortune then let them be sure to chuse a handsome young man that is lusty and able to do his work; for if she be fain to seek for another to do that work which he should do it may breed great dissension.

And thus endeth Mother Bunch's advice to all young men and maids, wishing good luck and good fortune to them all. And now (rather than you should think you have not enough for your money) the author has added two merry songs:

Tune of "Cuddle my Cuddle."

You young men and batchelors all,
Take notice of what I shall say;
The strongest man may catch a fall
If with Venus he delight to play.

It is nothing for to woo a maid,
If he have but to please her withal;
But yet he may soon be betray'd,
If she chance backward to fall.

Young Cupid is a pretty fine l oy
And Venus his mother loves sport
And gallants doth love for to toy
With pretty young ladies at the Court.

The Ploughman loves country Jone,
Betty, Mary, and lovely Nan;
And he with a merry tone
Can please them every one.

But Jone loves Jarvis the Joiner,
And Betty with Martin can bill,
And Mary loves John the gold-finder,
And Nan loves George of the Mill.

Tom Tinker loves Kate and her kettle
And Kate she thinks him her best friend
Because he's a man of mettle.
Concluding my ditty doth end.

Another of the same tune.

Attend ye gentlemen all,
And a Story I here will unfold
A bad story oft proves too true
For the poor suffers hunger and cold.

'Twas writ in an evening bright,
When Bacchus began to be muddy,
And Luna gave glorious light
Then Poor Tom fell into his study.

Which troubled his brain full sore,
To see how extortion doth thrive
And conscience kicked out of door,
Such cruelty now is alive.

My lady can dance in her smock
Whilst Joan at tick tack doth play
A cuckold the cradle may rock;
For he that is bound must obey.

His master if he doth command,
And his mistress if she do bid go;
For some women would have all to stand
Hold, earman, lest you overthrow.

A woman when she is unlac'd
Much danger is got by a fall;
Between the foot and the waist
The Cobbler will work with his awl.

Now for those poor young creatures that have pined themselves to the green sickness, and neglected the cure till it is almost past, those that are the worst pretenders to phisnomy might easily guess their distemper and prescribe their remedy without the help of a dispensatory, and all those of what constitution soever, that languish in single sheets till fifteen; I will tell (if your courage will serve to try the experiment) how you shall know and see the persons that shall ease you of the simple thing so much talked of called a maidenhead, by him that must be your husband, collected from the Twelve Sybils, Trismajistus, and Cornelius Agrippa, and this is

The First Way.

You that desire to know it this way must wait till Midsummer Eve, then at night three or four of you, or more or less, must take your smocks and dip them in fair water, then turn the wrong side outwards, and hang them on chairs before the fire, and have by you a vessel with drink in it and lay some salt in another before the fire, and be sure not to speak a word whatever you hear or see. In a little time the likeness of those persons you shall marry will come and turn your smocks, and drink to you; now if there be any of you that will never marry, they will hear a bell, but not the rest but whoever hears this bell none of my authors is positive that she shall dye a maid.

Another, and quickly tried.

Which is this: you are only to take a little hemp-seed and go

into what place you please by yourself, and carry the seed in your apron, and with your right hand throw it over your left shoulder, saying thus:

Hemp-seed I sow, hemp-seed I sow,
And he that must be my true love,
Come after me and mow.

And at the ninth time expect to see the figure of him you are to wed, or else hear a bell, as before.

Yet though you hear the sad and dismal bell,
'Tis your fault if you lead apes in hell.

Another way.

Which is this: you that dare venture yourselves into a church-yard just as it strikes twelve, take there a naked sword in your hand, and go nine times about the church, saying only thus, *Here's the sword, but where's the scabbard?* Which continue all the time you go round; and the ninth time the person you are to marry will meet you with a scabbard, and so kiss you; if not, a bell as before.

Another, which is called the Dutch Cake.

Three, or four, or more of you are to make a cake of half flour and half salt (no matter what flour it is) and some of every one of your own water, make this cake broad and thin, then every one of you either make a mark that you know or set the two first letters of your name on it with a pin or bodkin, but leave such a distance that it may be cut; then set it before

the fire to bake, but all this while speak not a word. Turn it every one of you once, then let it bake a little more and then throw on every one a little salt and she that turn'd it first let her turn it again, then the person to be her husband will cut out her name and break it in two and give her one half, and so the next, and the next, till the last. If there be any so unfortunate to hear a bell, I wish I had them to my bedfellows this night to prevent leading apes in hell.

Another way.

The first change of the new moon in the new year; the first time you see, hold your hands across, saying this three times,

New moon, new moon, I pray thee
Tell me this night who my true love will be.

Then go to bed without speaking any more that night and you will certainly dream of the person you are to marry.

Another, experienced very often.

Young men or maids may do onely this: Take some rose-marry flowers, and some bay leaves, a little thyme, sweet marjoram, and sidder wood; make these into powder, and with a little barley flour make a cake, but do not bake it. Lay this under your head any Friday night, and if you dream of musick, you will marry those you desire in a little time; if of the sea or ships, you'll travel first; if of a church, you must be contented to die single.

Another.

The first time you hear the cuckoo sing look under your left shoe and you will find hair of the colour of your wife or husband without the help of the Devil.

THE

HISTORY

OF

MOTHER BUNCH OF THE WESTE

CONTAINING

MANY RARITIES OUT OF HER GOLDEN CLOSET OF CURIOSITIES.

PART THE SECOND.

Printed and Sold at the Printing-Office
Bow Church-Yard, London.

INTRODUCTION.

One Michaelmas-day old Mother Bunch sitting upon the bank of a river, joining to a neighbouring grove, she beheld the late flourishing branches in their decay, whose leaves were falling to the earth. From this she began to consider seriously of her own mortality; and since Old Time had hurried on the Winter of her age, which had covered her head with grey locks, she might expect e'er long she must fall like the leaves to the earth; therefore she resolved, in regard she had always been a kind friend to young men and maids, that she would leave a fair testimony of her love before she left the world; since her painful study and strict observation had made a large improvement in her stock of knowledge, she would not have it buried in the grave with her, but leave it to posterity, for the benefit of young men and maids, whereby they may learn to understand their good and bad fortunes, and by the direction of this book,

be furnished with many secret rarities never published to the world.

Accordingly the next day she wrote letters of invitation to the young men and maids to repair to her house on St. Luke's day; the maids she appointed to come in the morning to be first instructed, for these two reasons as she herself was a woman, she would teach the young women first, lest the batchelors should be too severe on them; the second was it being Horn Fair day, many of the batchelors would be employed in the morning, in handing old citizens young wives to the fair, and in the afternoon they might be at liberty. This was the determination of Old Mother Bunch.

THE SECOND PART OF
MOTHER BUNCH, ETC.

Now against the day appointed, Mother Bunch deck'd her house, and getting up very early that morning she placed herself in the closet where her treasure lay. Now the first that entered the room was Margery Loveman, a maltster's maid, who with a low curtsey said, Good morrow, Mother Bunch, I am come to partake of your bounty; for I hear you have a second time opened your Golden Closet of Curiosities.—Yes, daughter, said she, so I have, and thou shalt partake of it.—Here are infallible rules and directions in all manner of love intrigues, that you may know what sort of man you'll marry, and whether he will prove loving or no. Dear mother these are the things I would know; for believe me out of all my sweethearts I'd willingly chuse the best; 'tis true I have 150*l.* the noise of which has brought many

sweethearts, and I'd willingly know which come for pure love and which for the lucre of the money. Daughter, said she, here is an experiment, if you will but try it, will make a full discovery of the reality of their love. Let a report be spread, that you are robbed of all you have in the world; if, after this, there is any one continues his love as before, you may be sure he is faithful. But be sure keep this counsel to yourself, that the mystery may not be discovered. I'll take care of that, dear mother, quoth Margery, and I heartily thank you for this kind advice, so good morrow, for I must needs go.

Good morrow, daughter, she reply'd,
Young men are false and must be try'd.

She was no sooner gone, but in came Mrs. Susan, a young Sempstress from Salisbury, who entered wringing of her hands. How now, quoth she, what's the matter daughter, you take on at this rate? Alas! Mother Bunch, quoth Susan, my, my, my——. What's the matter? Why my sorrow is more than I am able to bear; for mother, dear Frank, the fiddler and I are fallen out and he swears he will not have me. Come, daughter, quoth she, be of good cheer, I'll put you in a way to see whether he is angry or no. She that's afraid of the grass must never piss in a meadow. One swallow never makes a summer, nor one woodcock a winter. Let your angry lover alone for a season, and he'll come to himself again; for I know fond love is a puny darling, and wants humouring; therefore let him alone, in time he'll forget his anger, and return to thee again, if

he has any principle of good nature or loyal love in him, and if not, you had better be without him, than for your lifetime to be ty'd to a sour apple-tree. Remember the old proverb, Set thy stool in the sun, if a knave goes an honest man may come. I hope you have not play'd the wanton with him. No, mother, but he fain would have play'd a lesson on my lute the other market day only, but I had more grace than to let him. Say'st thou so, daughter? Why I tell thee, he did it to try thee, and since he finds that you withstood him, he will never leave you. Well, dear mother, she said, your words are comfortable to me, and when I find the good effects, I'll return and give you an account; and now mother, farewel.

Right happy daughter may you be,
In guarding your virginity.

The next which entered the room was Margaret, the miller's maid, who after making a low curtsey and giving Mother Bunch the time of the day, desired to know for what reason she sent her a letter. Why quoth the old woman, to the end that I might reveal to you some secrets, that are both relative and conducive to love, which I have never yet discovered to the world. But mother, said Margaret, I am a meer stranger to love, for I never knew what it meant. That may be, quoth she, yet you know not how soon you may receive the arrows of Cupid, and then you'll be glad of some of my advice; for I know the best of you desires to lie with a man; and I'll appeal to you if you would not be glad of a husband. Mother,

quoth Margaret, you come too close to the matter, and if I may speak my mind, I'd willingly embrace such a one; for although housekeeping is chargeable, yet marriage is honourable. Thou say'st well daughter, quoth Mother Bunch, and if thou hast a mind to see the man, follow my directions and you shall not fail. Let me see, this is St. Luke's Day, which I have found by my long experience to be fitter for this purpose than St. Agnes's and the ingredients more excellent. Take Marygold flowers, a sprig of Marjoram, Thyme, and a little Wormwood; dry them before a fire, rub them to powder, then sift it thro' a fine piece of lawn; simmer these, with a small quantity of virgin honey, in white wine vinegar, over a slow fire; with this anoint your stomach, breast and lips, when lying down and repeat these words thrice:

St. Luke, St. Luke, be kind to me,
In dreams let me my true love see.

This said, hasten to sleep, and in the soft slumbers of your nights repose, the very man whom you shall marry will appear before you, walking to and fro, near your bedside, very plain and visible to be seen. You shall perfectly behold his visage, stature and deportment and if he be one that will prove a loving husband, he will approach you with a smile; which if he does, do not seem to be overfond or peevish, but receive the same with a mild and modest blush. But if he be one, who after marriage will forsake thy bed to wander off after strange women, he will offer to be rude and uncivil with thee. These

are rarities I have never before divulged, and will prove of advantage. I must thank you for all your love, quoth Margaret, and so farewel, good Mother Bunch. Good-bye, dear daughter, she immediately reply'd,

Let Joy and Pleasure crown your Days,
And a kind Man your Fortune Raise.

Next came in Kate the clothworker's daughter, Doll the dairymaid, Joan, Bridget, Nancy, Phillis, etc. in all about forty together, who almost filled the room, each of them crying, Dear Mother Bunch, remember me, O mother, remember me, etc. that they made the old woman deaf with their great noise. My dear daughters, quoth the old woman, set you down and be quiet, and you shall partake of my benediction. Now daughters, I'll sit in the midst of you and read you a lecture; meaning to give you an account of some extraordinary curiosities here in my closet newly broke open; declaring that the things which are profitable for one maid are so for another.

First, If any one here desires to know the name of the man whom they shall marry, let her who desires this seek for a green peascod, in which there are full nine peas; which done either write or cause to be written on a small slip of paper these words:

Come in my dear and do not fear.

Which writing you must enclose within the aforesaid peascod, and lay it under the door. Then mind the next person who comes in, for you'll certainly marry one of the same name.

Secondly, she who desires to be satisfied whether she shall enjoy the man desired or no; Let her take two lemon peels in the morning, and wear them all day under her armpits; then at night let her rub the four posts of the bed with them; which done in your sleep he will seem to come and present you with a couple of lemons, but if not, there is no hope.

Thirdly, she who desires to know to what manner of fortune she shall be married, if a gentleman, a tradesman, or a traveller. The experiment is this, take a walnut, a hazlenut, and a nutmeg, grate them and mix them up with butter and sugar into pills, which must be taken at lying down, and then if her fortune be to marry a gentleman, her sleep will be filled with golden dreams, if a tradesman, odd noises and tumults, if a traveller, then will thunder and lightning disturb her.

Fourthly, St. Agnes's day I have not yet blotted out of my book; but I have found a more exact way of trial than before. You need not abstain from kisses, nor be forced to keep fast for the glance of a lover in the night. If you can but rise to be at the church door between the hours of twelve and one in the morning; and then put the forefinger of your right hand into the keyhole, and then repeat the following words thrice,

O sweet St. Agnes now draw near,
And with my true love strait appear.

Then will he presently approach with a smiling countenance.

Fifthly, my daughters, know ye the 14th of February is Valentine's day, at which time the fowls of the air begin to

couple; and the young men and maids are for chusing their mates. Now that you may speed, take this approved direction: Take five Bay leaves, lay one under every corner of your pillow, and the fifth in the middle; then lying down to rest, repeat these lines seven times over:

Sweet Guardian Angel let me have
What I most earnestly do crave
A Valentine endow'd with love,
That will both kind and constant prove.

Then to your content you'll either have the Valentine you desire, or one more excellent.

Sixthly, the old experiment of the Midsummer smock found out in a much better method than before, by my sublime and painful study in philosophy. And now, my daughters, said she, it is thus: Let seven of you go together on Midsummer Eve, just at sunset, into a silent grove, and gather every one of you a sprig of red sage, and return into a private room, with a stool in the middle; each one having a clean smock, turned wrong side outwards, hanging on a line cross the room, and let every one lay their sprig of red sage in a clean bason of rose water, set on the stool; which done place yourselves on a row, and continue till twelve or one, saying nothing, be it what you will you see; for after midnight each one's sweetheart or husband that shall be, will take each maids sprig out of the rose water, and sprinkle his love's shift; and those who are so unfortunate, as never to be married, their sprigs will not be moved, but in

lieu of that, sobs and sighs will be heard. This has been often try'd and it never failed of its effects.

These things I have found out of late,
To make young lovers fortunate.

And now, my dear daughters, I have but a word or two more to say at the present, and that by way of caution.

In the twelvemonths I find about thirty-one days unlucky; so as you tender your own happiness, take care you marry not on those days, and for your better instruction I will set down those days for you.

In January are four, the 7th, 14th, 17th, and 18th.
In February two, the 5th and 10th.
In March three, the 9th, 19th, and 21st.
In April two, the 6th and 7th.
In May two, the 4th and 13th.
In June three, the 7th, 9th, and 10th.
In July two, the 6th and 7th.
In August two, the 11th and 16th.
In September three, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th.
In October three, the 4th, 14th, and 15th.
In November two, the 15th and 24th.
In December three, the 6th, 8th, and 9th.

Observe my Rules of all these days,
And then you will your Fortunes raise.

This said, old Mother Bunch gave them a cup of her cordial water, and so dismiss'd them, the young Damsels returning her hearty thanks for her motherly advice.

After Mother Bunch had dined, the young men came, as Tom the Miller, Ralph the Thatcher, and Robin the Ploughman, with a great many of other trades and callings, whom Mother Bunch invited to sit down, that so she might the better deliver her salutary counsel to them.

And first, she begins with Tom the Miller, saying, Ah, Tom, thou art a sad fellow, there's not a maid comes to the mill but you will be bobbing under their aprons; but take my word for it, if you don't leave off, you'll be ruined. What woman will have such a one? She may justly conclude, you will be caterwauling still. You know what I mean Tom. Yes, yes, mother, but sure you dont take me for such a one. Yes Tom, I do, and I am but seldom mistaken; 'tis you millers that fill the country with crack'd maidenheads, that the honest husbandman already finds the ground till'd up. But farewell, I will have nothing to do with such as you.

Then turning to Ralph the Thatcher, she said, I find you are desirous of a wife, and your ambition is such, she must be rich, young and beautiful. So you can't be content with honest Joan, to whom you promis'd marriage, but must change her for a finikin madam; but I can tell you she won't stand picking of straws with you; her fair face will find her many friends in a corner; and so you may chance to be a cuckold, and indeed but justly served in your kind; and therefore I pray you to return to your old lover, for she is an honest girl, and therefore far more fit for you than such a butterfly as you have lately followed.

Then she stretched forth her hand to Robin the Plowman,

saying, Thou art an honest fellow, and good luck will attend thee; I don't mean bags of gold nor heaps of silver, but thou shalt have an industrious wife, one who will be willing to labour, a true and faithful yokemate, who will be a chearful partner in thy weal or woe, to support thee under thy troubles, as the Poet has it,

The Burden may be borne by two, with care,
Which is, perhaps, too much for one to bear.

Honest Robin this is thy fortune, and as thou art a downright man, I'm glad to find it so.

Thus Mother Bunch went round the room
And told them what would be their doom
If they her daughters did betray,
And steal their maidenheads away,
Each should be punished with a bride,
By whom they should be hornify'd,
But if they were right honest men
They should have happy fortunes then.

This said she did her blessing give,
In love and happiness to live;
Which when they did the same receive,
Of Mother Bunch they took their leave,
Declaring she had told them more
Than e'er they understood before.

FINIS.